1/9/72

mr. gene roberts
national editor
the new york times
229 W 43 st.,
new york, n,y. 10036

dear mr. roberts,

almost losing a thumb yesterday one-hands mem, hence problems, including with caps.

after reading fred graham's story this morning, i tried to call him. your washington office opens late sundays. i phoned you, not expecting you in but asking a patch through or leave word. the desk said it wouldphone you at home with my request that you phone back, that in my opinion this was important. i remained at the phone save for 20 minutes beginning at 4 p.m. long before having to leave briefly i reached you washington office an left similar message for fred, not returned.

the importance i see in this as it relates to the two of you anwhat has become the institution you serve lies in your collective integrity. I spoke to fred three times before he wrote his piece and did everything i honorably could to encourage him to not again become a utensil for th expectoration oh dishonest government. if i do not attribute this intent to him and you - an I DO NOT - ibtent and reality do not coincide. It requires considerably less acumen than you both have to recognize the inherent impossibility of what you played straight, with no questioning and in what is a clear departure from norm, not seeking an independent other side freely and openly available from me. the result is that judging from the saturation radio treatment i've heard, you have all become apologists for evil an falsehood, part of an enormous propaganda campaign, an i repeat and emphasize this is separate ftom intent, intent is irrelevant. reality is.

the omnipresent error is not all attributed to lattimore, nor can it be. but there is serious error that cannot but hurt those already victims and protects those guilty of addication of high resposibility. had graham checked with me, as i asked him, that he could have avoided and those who in the future will have to write about this and you will not have to ponder motive. they will be blinded by what you did. this, really, is all that counts.

it is not only because of discomfort that i had tried to avoid writing you. i had no desire to make a record that, inevitably, will persist and cannot possibly do you any credit. i serve no constructive purpose in hurting anyone, and as best i can i seek to avoid what may do so. but i also have responsibilities. i have assumed them to the point of personal ruin, and i cannot be silent in the face of the most recent in a long series of discreditable and naked sycophancies by various parts of the times, all inconsistent with normal journalistic practise.

i am aware of you early efforts - and pardon the bluntness, reportorial failures - in dallas. they do no label you incompetent, but they are failures. they have dominated your thinking, if note more, sine. i also have interviewed witnesses in dallas. what i learned you at least could have if you had known what to look for and who to ask.

please understand no personal offense is intended, but i'd like you to consider what prospect there is for any kind of decent society, especially a representative society, if dishonest government is sheltered by shall i say unquestioning rather than dishonest press? no matter how pure you may conceive your puppose. i repeat what you do is all that counts. if you are a decent man, as i do presume, i offer the prediction you will come to suffer deep shame from this latest blind, unquestioning acceptance of an obvious pl nt and then playing it straight when it requiredNO special knowledge to recognize fraud.

i did know about this in advance and i did preserve fred's trust and confidence even if he did not ask it.

take the third graph as an example. please tell me how any part of or any combination of what lattimore says he saw could possibly "'eliminate any doubt completely' about the validity of the Warren commission's conclusions that lee harvey oswald fired all the shots that struck the president". they are, totally and completely, even if as lattimore represents (and this also is false). how can they possibly show who fired anything? And please note that all the injuries to the governor-not mentioned at all - must also have been caused by these same bullets, plus other things. This is no better than propaganda.

fred made several serious errors in his own name. they hurt the innocent and they rape history and they exculpate the guilty. i have to ask and expect that you regard this as confidential and off the record, for as i told fred, i have a completed book in which i have an enormous investment and rights to safeguard. but it is 100% false that the kennedys guarded the film "so closely that they were not allowed to be seen by even members and staff officials of the Warren commission..." in all elements fred was told a lie. he should have checked it. i did make this offer. the film was seen, more than once, by more than the commission, and my proof is beyond any question. over and above this, as you should know and fred as a lawyer certainly does, it was in any event beyond the power of the kennedys to deny this film to the commission, which did have subpena powers.

I spare you the ample more there is. but ought you not be asking yourselves why the times suppressed my freedom of information suits, including for just this evidence, the government going to court to deny it, and then the so-called protector og kennedy interest giving it to a unashamed apologist whose only genuine expertise is in urine? i offered fred his earlier writing. shaving and squeezing bullets is as relevent as asking "would you rather go to coney island or by bus". Lattimore knows nothing about the evidence he must know to be able to have ANY in context opinion of what he has just seen.

Another lie of which you should be aware is that only one bullet was found after the shooting. before the end of the day, not fewer than two were.

If you as individuals and the times are off on a get-kennedy kick, you may not realize how successful a start you have made.

meanwhile, i leave you to your collective consciences in the hope you will yet search them and find that despite the fame and fortune that comes from times association you can somehow rise above the retailing in inherently incredible handouts the source of which you had to know, to take a wee bit of time out of this retailing for a return to the professional reporting of which you are capable, a belated remembrance of the past and the norms and principles, if not the accepted standards, of our calling.

For you as individuals i regret this very much.

sincerely,

harold weisberg